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Newsman Puts Together Story of U.S. Spy Net

THE SUPER SPIES. By Andrew Tully. Morrow. 250 Pages. $5.95.

By Charles V. Newman

"THE SHADOW knows . . . the Shadow knows everything," the old radio thriller said.

Nobody has come up with an invisible man yet. But Andrew Tully, a Washington columnist who wrote "CIA: The Inside Story," says that the United States has a lot of them, in effect, in its electronic spy network.

Where is it? Who runs it? Tully says that knowing about Red China's nuclear tests — in advance — is part of a day's work for the National Security Agency, a supersecret intelligence organization run by the Department of Defense.

Tiring of conflicting, rivalry-plagued intelligence reports from the different armed forces, Tully says that President Truman created the beginnings of the agency in 1949 with the Armed Forces Security Agency. To widen its reception, it was changed, in 1952, to the National Security Agency. It contributes its data to the administration, along with reports from the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency (set up at an assistant-secretary level by Robert McNamara), the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the FBI and, on occasion, the Atomic Energy Commission.

Tully breaks down the intelligence flow this way: from NSA comes data from electronic eavesdropping; from DIA comes militarily gained reports (photo-reconnaisance, prisoner interrogation, etc.); State sends in material from diplomatic sources; CIA from cloak-and-dagger types and from extensive research into bits and pieces culled from magazines, speeches, letters, gossip, etc. The FBI gains intelligence data out of its policing activities, and the AEC contributes reports on radiation levels and seismic shocks.

His outline of these organizations is revealing in itself. But it is his peeks into NSA, DIA and the State Department unit that tell the most.

Flying saucers, Tully says, are actually unmanned intelligence gatherers put up by NSA. He says they do everything attributed to them — hovering, skipping, zipping, flashing, disappearing — in the process of picking up photographs, weather data and population reports.

More plausibly, Tully says that the SAMOS satellites, sent up usually from the West Coast, criss-cross the globe and send back barrels of information, on friend and foe alike.

NSA is also involved in intercepting wired and wireless messages and has a large department devoted to code breaking, Tully says. Another section is involved with creating codes for American use, another studies how to improve intercepting and transmitting devices. Others administer the agency, train its personnel and keep a watch on itself — not always successfully, he says.

Despite the reorganizations to prevent it, Tully says that there is still overlapping and rivalry and, consequently, conflicts in evaluation between the different intelligence agencies. He lines up BIR, NSA and DIA as usually being on one side, with CIA on the other — no one forgetting the Bay of Pigs fiasco that CIA brought off. He says all the others resent the FBI excursions into intelligence. The AEC data, being usually technical, is accepted by all for what it is.

The book ends with an evaluation of America's intelligence efforts — Tully gives it good marks — and some criticism. He would reorganize further to prevent the conflicts and avoid the duplications. He blames Congress for not keeping a close eye on the various units and for writing blank checks for intelligence too freely. Many congressmen, he says, refuse to look into it because of the secrecy; others — the older, more militant ones who know what is going on — endorse it fully.

Tully uses a lot of incidents to explain the workings of the agencies. While it is certainly revealing, the book is not deep. It is evidently the result of a good newsman's keeping on good terms with good sources in secret places — bits picked up out of the rivalry or in casual conversations and pieced together to reveal what is going on in agencies that many readers do not know exist.